

VZCZCXRO3206
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHPB RUEHPOD
DE RUEHKU #0667 1221206
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 021206Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8972
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 1791

UNCLAS KUWAIT 000667

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP, AIWG FOR WINN; AMMAN FOR WHITTLESEY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [KSCA](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: NEW HEALTH MINISTER SAYS KUWAIT IS "LEARNING AS IT GOES" ON AVIAN FLU

REF: KUWAIT 485

¶1. (SBU) On May 2, Ambassador met with new Minister of Health (MOH) Dr. Maasouma Al-Mubarak, (one of two female ministers in the new cabinet), who was previously the Minister of Communications, to congratulate her on her appointment. Dr. Al-Mubarak said there are a number of problems that need addressing at the ministry, and acknowledged the high-profile nature of her position given the Parliamentary attention to the ministry's actions. Dr. Al-Mubarak said one of her priorities is the ministry's program for sending Kuwaitis abroad for medical treatment, noting that abuse of the privilege "is a problem," although more so for patients traveling to Europe than those bound for the U.S. Dr. Al-Mubarak said care received at U.S. hospitals is "the best in the world," but stated her concern about escalating health care costs and a "double standard of billing" in which the MOH is sometimes billed 45-50% more than when patients pay for their own care.

¶2. (SBU) Ambassador congratulated Dr. Al-Mubarak on the GOK's handling of the recent avian influenza (AI) outbreak in poultry, particularly the work of the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources. He said the USG stands ready to continue helping the GOK in planning for a possible AI outbreak among humans. Dr. Al-Mubarak acknowledged the ministry's lack of planning for an outbreak, but said the MOH is "learning as we go" and gained valuable experience from dealing with recent suspected human cases (Reftel). She said the ministry currently has enough Tamiflu to cover 40% of Kuwait's population and is planning to procure or reserve more. Al-Mubarak said she welcomed USG assistance with Kuwait's AI preparations.

¶3. (SBU) Al-Mubarak said she wants to explore agreements with U.S. and other foreign hospitals to bring medical experts to Kuwait to work with Kuwait's Humanitarian Operations Center in addressing treatment needs for trauma cases coming from Iraq. Similar agreements could also be reached to work with Kuwaiti public hospitals to provide international expertise in treating specific ailments, she said. Al-Mubarak said she recently visited a joint project in Turkey with Johns Hopkins Medical Center and has requested a copy of the agreement to see how something similar could be established in Kuwait.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>
